

4/9/4 (Item 4 from file: 15)

DIALOG(R) File 15:ABI/Inform(R)

(c) 2005 ProQuest Info&Learning. All rts. reserv.

00658237 93-07458

The Use of Created Versus Celebrity Spokespersons in Advertisements

Tom, Gail; Clark, Rebecca; Elmer, Laura; Grech, Edward; Masetti, Joseph, Jr.; Sandhar, Harmona

Journal of Consumer Marketing v9n4 PP: 45-51 Fall 1992 ISSN: 0736-3761

JRNL CODE: JCK

DOC TYPE: Journal article LANGUAGE: English LENGTH: 7 Pages

SPECIAL FEATURE: Charts References

WORD COUNT: 2683

GEOGRAPHIC NAMES: US

DESCRIPTORS: Advertisements; Endorsements; Celebrities; Effectiveness;

Statistical analysis; Consumer attitudes; Studies

CLASSIFICATION CODES: 9190 (CN=United States); 7100 (CN=Market research);

9130 (CN=Experimental/Theoretical)

ABSTRACT: A marketer who creates spokespersons to represent a product can control their development by giving them characteristics that are both effective with the target audience and congruent with desirable characteristics of the endorsed product. Marketers who use celebrities must select those whose characteristics make them effective with the target audience and whose public persona matches that of the advertised product. Three male celebrities, 3 female celebrities, and 3 role-playing spokespersons were selected for a study. Some 100 participants were asked to identify the brand of product associated with the spokesperson. The results indicate that created spokespersons were much more effective in establishing a link to the product than were celebrity spokespersons. Moreover, the number of consumers who did not know the brand associated with the spokesperson was less for the created spokespersons than for the male or female celebrities. The effectiveness of real people serving as spokespersons was gender-specific.

TEXT: The frequent use of spokespersons in advertisements is an indication of the widespread belief in their effectiveness. The use of celebrity spokespersons, in particular, has been gaining popularity. According to a recent survey by Video Storyboard Tests, Inc., (4) more television viewers today (22 percent) have very positive feelings about celebrity spokespersons than in 1987 (16 percent). Moreover, almost twice as many viewers as in 1987 indicated that celebrity spokespersons made the advertisement more memorable (39 percent today versus 22 percent in 1987).

SOCIAL POWERS THAT INFLUENCE AUDIENCES

It may be that these spokespersons' characteristics imbue them with above-average personal influence. Their ability to influence an audience may lie in one or more of the following types of power: expert power, referent power, legitimate power, coercive power, and reward power. (2)

Both the type and quantity of social powers determine spokespersons' effectiveness. In general, the more social powers that are possessed, the greater the ability to influence the behavior of others. Thus, a spokesperson who possesses referent power, expert power, and reward power should be more effective than a spokesperson who possesses only expert power.

Expert power has to do with the audience's perception of the spokesperson as an expert for the product he or she is endorsing. For example, Bo Jackson's effectiveness as an endorser for Nike is based upon the acknowledgement of his athletic expertise. Similarly, the audience takes notice when Lee Iacocca speaks about the quality of Chrysler automobiles because they recognize his expertise in this field.

Spokespersons possess referent power when an audience identifies with and aspires to be like them. For example, while both Andre Agassi and Michael Chang are recognized as talented tennis players, they appeal to different segments of the population. Agassi has referent power for those who

identify with the Bohemian--carefree, rebellious, and scruffy. Chang, on the other hand, has referent power for those who identify with someone more conventional. Children aspire to be like their hero, Michael Jordan, and they will emulate his behavior and eat the Wheaties that he endorses.

Legitimate power rests on an audience's perception of the legitimacy of an appeal. When George Bush served as spokesperson for the United Way, he was able to influence U.S. citizens to give to this worthy cause. The legitimacy of his appeal was supported by the American cultural norm of humanitarianism. That is, the audience may have interpreted the message to contribute to those less fortunate than themselves as a behavior that they "should" carry out because it is the socially acceptable thing to do. Furthermore, it was suggested by the President of the United States, and the audience may feel that they should consider the wishes of the leader of their country.

Although much less likely, a spokesperson might attempt to influence the audience's behavior through force or coercive power. This may have been the strategy behind using tough guy "Robert Conrad" as the spokesperson for Eveready Battery. With the battery balanced upon his shoulders, he menacingly exhorted, "I dare anyone to knock these batteries off." When George Zimmerman guarantees the low price and high quality of the suits at Men's Wearhouse, his effectiveness is based upon reward power, his ability to reward the consumers for their behavior by providing a quality product and a price lower than those at competitive outlets.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWO TYPES OF SPOKESPERSONS

When selecting a spokesperson to represent a product, marketers can either choose a celebrity or create a spokesperson. A marketer who creates spokespersons can control their development by giving them characteristics that are both effective with the target audience and congruent with desirable characteristics of the endorsed product.

Created spokespersons can be real people playing a role, or they can be imaginary people. One of the oldest imaginary spokespersons is Betty Crocker. Created in 1921 by General Foods, she has continually served the role of the first lady of baking. Figure 1 shows how she has changed over time. (Figure 1 omitted) Other well-known created spokespersons are the Pillsbury Dough Boy, the McDonald's clown, and the Jolly Green Giant.

Created spokespersons such as Joe Isuzu, the tongue-in-cheek, tall-tale representative for Isuzu Cars, are real people playing the role of a created person. Other examples are Mr. Whipple, for Charmin Toilet Tissue, and Madge, the manicurist whose customers soak their fingers in Palmolive Dishwashing Detergent.

Marketers who use a celebrity as a spokesperson do not have the control that they would for a **created character**. Here the marketer's task is to select celebrities whose **characteristics** make them effective with the target **audience** and whose public persona matches that of the advertised product.

While the use of celebrity spokespersons can be effective, such usage has also resulted in gaffes. (4,5) For example, advertisers have used celebrities to promote products they have never used. Cybil Shepherd's effectiveness as the spokesperson for the beef industry was diluted when she revealed that she did not eat meat. For all the millions that Pepsi paid Michael Jackson to dance and sing about Pepsi, Michael Jackson never drank Pepsi. Advertisers have also erred in selecting spokespersons who over-consumed the endorsed product. All the while that Bruce Willis extolled the virtue of Seagram's Golden Wine Cooler, the tabloids rumored that he had a drinking problem. Ringo Starr spoke on behalf of Sun Country Wine Coolers and then entered an alcoholic rehabilitation center. Advertisers also have little control over celebrities' personal behavior. Tony Curtis's delivering of the American Cancer Society's message to quit smoking rang hollow when he was arrested for possession of marijuana. Evel Knievel's potential as a hero for American youth was cut short when he went after a reporter with a baseball bat.

An equally troublesome problem with celebrities is the chimera-like nature of their effectiveness with different product categories. (5) For example, while Bill Cosby was equally effective in conveying the fun and good taste of JELL-O's new vanilla pudding pops and the quality and integrity of Ford Motor Company, his plea for consumers to buy their stocks from E. F. Hutton fell on deaf ears. When John Houseman emphatically stated that Smith Barney "made money the old-fashioned way," people listened; they did not listen, however, when he attempted to convince them to eat at McDonald's. The varying effectiveness of celebrity spokespersons may be due to overexposure or to mismatch between the celebrity and the product (e.g., it is difficult for many people to believe that John Houseman eats at McDonald's).

The usage of created spokespersons and that of celebrity spokespersons differ in a number of important ways. First, with created spokespersons marketers have the freedom to create the individual's characteristics and public persona, whereas with celebrities marketers are limited to those who possess desired traits. Second, for the created spokespersons, marketers can specifically design traits and public persona that portray the attributes desired in the product. Third, whereas celebrities frequently endorse more than one product, created spokespersons are almost always created to endorse one product.

Research has indicated that the effectiveness of spokespersons is dependent upon their congruity with the endorsed product. (1,3,6,8) Because created spokespersons allow for greater control, more specific linkage of their characteristics with product characteristics, and singular usage with a specific product, created spokespersons may, in general, be more effective than celebrities. An exploratory study was undertaken to investigate this question.

THE STUDY

As was noted above, some created spokespersons are real people playing a role while others are imaginary. Of these two categories, the role-playing type is more similar to celebrity spokespersons. Both celebrity and role-playing spokespersons are represented by real people. Imaginary spokespersons may, in some cases, be more similar to a logo than to a celebrity.

Table 1 shows three male celebrities, three female celebrities, and three role-playing spokespersons selected for this study. (Table 1 omitted) The celebrities were featured in television commercials broadcast before, during, and after the time period of the study. The created spokespersons, in contrast, were not broadcast during the period of the study, and some had not been featured in commercials for quite a while. This criterion was used for created spokespersons so that their longevity could be tested.

One hundred participants, 50 males and 50 females between the ages of 19 and 45, who reported watching an average of over 20 hours of television weekly, were asked to identify the brand of product associated with the spokesperson. The results, presented in Table 1, indicate that created spokespersons were much more effective in establishing a link to the product than were celebrity spokespersons. Moreover, the number of consumers who did not know the brand associated with the spokesperson was less for the created spokespersons than for the male or female celebrities. This same finding was true for incorrect association of the products and spokespersons.

The effectiveness of the created spokespersons is most likely the result of their singular association with a specific product over a long period of time, as well as their specific persona typifying the product characteristics. For example, Madge, the spokesperson for Palmolive, is friendly, gentle, and task-oriented and is the personification of Palmolive--gentle on your hands, but effective in cleaning your dishes. The spokesperson for Budweiser Beer, Spuds McKenzie, is offbeat, fun, and relaxed--the embodiment of the product. Mr. Whipple, fastidiously dressed, a bit persnickety and demanding, mirrors the quality of Charmin Toilet Tissue. Created spokespersons may be designed to possess expert power, referent power, and reward power for their audiences. The results of this

study demonstrates that the association between the created spokesperson and the product seems to be a very long-lasting one.

As Tables 2 and 3 illustrate, the effectiveness of real people serving as spokespersons were gender-specific. (Tables 2 and 3 omitted) Female spokespersons were more effective for female audiences and male spokespersons for the males. It may be that female spokespersons have more referent power for female consumers while male spokespersons have more for male consumers.

The results of this study mirror the results of a similar study investigating the effectiveness of three types of music used in advertisement: original songs created specifically for the advertised product, parodies of popular songs modified to mention the product's brand name, and popular songs. (7) The results of that study demonstrated that original songs were more effective than parodies of popular songs which, in turn, were more effective than popular songs in their original form.

Both studies indicated that originally created material, whether it be spokesperson or music, is more effective in creating memorability than the adoption of popular material.

The congruent results of both of these studies can be explained by the classical conditioning paradigm, (9,10) illustrated in Figure 2. (Figure 2 omitted) Consumers learn the association between the unconditioned stimulus (e.g., song or spokesperson) and the conditioned stimulus (e.g., the product) through repeated exposure. This link is much stronger with original material than with popular material. The popular material is associated not only with the advertised product, but with many other situations, persons, and things. These other associations weaken the linkage between the popular material and the product. The linkage in the case of original material is stronger because it is a unique linkage. The spokesperson or music creates feelings and perceptions that are transferred to the advertised product. Through this transfer process, the product's personality is shaped, and the consumers' attitude toward the products is created.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the present study was limited in the selection of created and celebrity spokespersons, and the findings could be strengthened with support from future studies that investigate a greater variety of celebrity and created spokespersons, these preliminary findings do suggest feasible directions for decision-makers to consider.

If the purpose of the advertisement is to gain attention and maintain sales, the use of well-known celebrities may be effective. Gaining attention to maintain the product at the consumers' top-of-the-mind awareness may be the purpose of advertisements for well-established products. Moreover, if celebrities are to be used as spokespersons, consideration should be given to selecting those who are the same gender as the target market. On the other hand, if the purpose of the spokesperson is to differentiate the brand from others on the market or to carve out a specific personality for the brand, a created spokesperson may be the most effective for establishing a permanent link in the consumer's memory.

Before a created spokesperson is used in an advertising campaign, the character should be tested with both focus groups and surveys. A major objective of the research should be to determine how the effectiveness of the spokesperson varies by the type and quantity of social powers the character possesses, as well as to evaluate the fit between the spokesperson's and the product's attributes. The effectiveness of the created spokesperson should also be monitored during the advertising campaign.

The advantages of using a created spokesperson, then, include the ability to control the spokesperson's action and to establish a long-lasting link between the product and the spokesperson. The cost of using a created spokesperson is the time it takes to build up the character's recognition, personality, and trait, all of which are already established with a

celebrity. However, a celebrity spokesperson's fame cannot flicker indefinitely, whereas, a created spokesperson's fame can last for the life of the product.

ENDNOTES

1. Caballiero, Marjorie J., James R. Lumpkin, and Charles S. Madden, "Using Physical Attractiveness as an Advertising Tool: An Empirical Test of the Attraction Phenomenon, *Journal of Advertising Research*, 29 (August/September 1989), 16-22.
2. French, John, and Bertram Raven, "The Bases of Social Power in D. Cartwright (Ed.), *Studies in Social Power*. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, 1959, pp. 150-167.
3. Kamins, Michael A., "An Investigation into the Match-Up-Hypothesis in Celebrity Advertising: When Beauty May Be Only Skin Deep," *Journal of Advertising*, 19:1 (1990), pp. 4-13.
4. Lipman, Joanne, "Celebrity Pitchmen Are Popular Again," *Wall Street Journal*, September 4, 1991, p. B5.
5. Marshall, Christy, 1987, "It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time," *Forbes*, 140 (December 28, 1987), 98-99.
6. McCracken, Grant, "Who Is the Celebrity Endorser? Cultural Foundations of the Endorsement Process," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16:3 (December 1989), 310-321.
7. McSweeney, Francis K., and Calvin Bierley, "Recent Developments in Classical Conditioning," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11 (September 1984), 619-631.
8. Misra, Shekhar, and Sharon E. Beatty, "Celebrity Spokesperson and Brand Congruence: An Assessment of Recall and Affect," *Journal of Business Research*, 21 (September 1990), 159-173.
9. Nord, Walter R., and J. Paul Peter, "A Behavior Modification Perspective on Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 44 (Spring 1980), 36-47.
10. Tom, Gail, "Marketing with Music," *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 7:2 (Spring 1990), 49-53.

Gail Tom is a professor of Marketing, Department of Management, School of Business Administration, California State University, Sacramento. She holds a Ph.D. in Consumer Behavior, an M.S. in Consumer Science, and a B.A. in Psychology from the University of California, Davis; an M.A. in Psychology from California State University, Sacramento, and an M.A. in Administration from the University of California, Riverside. She is the author of the textbook *Applications of Consumer Behavior* and has published widely in a diversity of journals including *Behavioral Science*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Human Factors*, *Journal of Direct Marketing*, *Applied and Basic Social Psychology*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *Business and Society*, *International Journal of Obesity*.

Rebecca Clark holds a B.S. in Business Administration from California State University, Sacramento, with a concentration in marketing. She is with the DMI Financial Group.

Laura Elmer is a graduate of California State University, Sacramento, with a B.S. degree in Business Administration, with a marketing concentration. She is currently in management with Mervyn's Department Stores of California.

Edward Grech is in management with Safeway Supermarkets. He is a graduate of California State University, Sacramento, with a B.S. degree in Business Administration, with a marketing concentration.

Joseph Masetti, Jr. earned his B.S. degree in Business Administration, with a marketing concentration, from California State University, Sacramento. He is with the Sales Division of Nabisco, Co.

Harmona Sandhar holds the position of Treasurer with Arishma Corp. She is a graduate of California State University, Sacramento, where she earned her B.S. degree in Business Administration.

THIS IS THE FULL-TEXT. Copyright The Journal of Consumer Marketing 1992
?